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AMERICAN ART NEWS

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"THE BLUE BOY"

Now that "The Blue Boy" is in the United States it would be a very gracious act on the part of its owner, Mr. Henry E. Huntington, if he would permit the people of the country to see this masterpiece of British portrait painting, which ranks as one of the world's most famous works of art. Before it left England this noble Gainsborough was placed on public view in the National Gallery in London for three weeks, and in that time 90,000 persons visited it. Public interest here is undoubtedly greater over the arrival of "The Blue Boy" than was that of the British public's in its departure. For there is a romantic appeal about the picture, its color and its subject, that is quite as appealing to Americans as is the enormous price paid for it.

The present exhibition of "The Blue Boy," with an admission fee of \$2 required, cannot be said to be "public" in any sense. If Mr. Huntington would offer to lend the painting to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for a month there would be no question of the readiness of the museum to accept it. The distinguished character of the Metropolitan's own collections would make a fitting shrine in which to set this latest great acquisition to the private collections of America. Moreover, the showing of the picture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art would make a view of it available to everyone in the city and its suburbs.

The Gainsborough is well worthy of such an introduction to America, and the people of New York would be deeply appreciative of the compliment.

WHEN "ART" IS ART

Several times in the last few months THE AMERICAN ART NEWS has found it pertinent to refer to the misconception of American taste on the part of Europeans which leads them to bring to this country collections of foreign paintings that have little or no merit in the expectation that our citizens will buy them at big prices. Invariably of late years such enterprises have proved disastrous and have resulted in heavy losses to the picture speculators who thought Americans were easy to please.

Again was this lesson driven home, and this time with particular emphasis, in the dispersal last week of the "Savoy family portraits" brought to this country by "the connoisseur Chevalier Raoul Tolentino." Including a few miscellaneous pictures, these "Savoy family portraits," fifty-two in number, averaged only \$99.80 each. Not even the prestige of the American Art Association, at one time so effective, which had catalogued them as the work of such men as Bassano, Van Loo, Mignard, Sustermans, Morone, Drouais, Rigaud, Peter Pourbus, Sanchez-Coello, Lely and Reynolds, could bring American collectors out to bid on them. Since a Van Loo brought as little as \$10 and two six-foot Coellos were sold for

\$15 each, the reader is left to judge for himself whether the attributions printed in the catalogue of the American Art Association were right or not.

Buyers of art in America have become discriminating. The time has passed when any painting, given the label of an illustrious old master, will be accepted for anything more than it really is—no matter whether it be offered in a basement gallery in a side street, or in an expensive catalogue of the American Art Association.

American art buyers have learned that a thing may be old without having either beauty or value—that a painting or piece of furniture may be a genuine "antique" and still be so worthless from an art standpoint that it is fit rather for fuel than for decoration; that an ugly old picture is just as execrable as an ugly new one. And they have learned moreover that not every picture labelled Rubens is a Rubens and not every Ziem is a Ziem—no matter who pays the printing bill.

The sooner Europeans understand that America is capable of knowing for itself when "art" is art, the happier we shall all be.

SAVING A VIEW

Through the generosity and public spirit of Mr. Frank Jay Gould the view of the landscape in front of the chateau of Maisons-Lafitte, France, has been saved to that town and to the French nation. This prospect includes land sloping down from the front of the chateau to the bank of the Seine. The municipal council of the town learned recently that house-building was contemplated on the property and called the attention of the national commission of historic monuments to this threatened blight. The commission offered to provide 75,000 francs for the purchase of the land, providing the municipal council could raise an equal sum. The council was unable to do this, and when Mr. Gould was informed of the situation he contributed the necessary 75,000 francs.

Although such an incident may appear to be somewhat outside the range of art, actually it is closely connected with it, particularly in the matter of public buildings and sculpture. One of the most striking illustrations of the blighting of a beautiful piece of architecture occurred when the notoriously ugly Mullett post office building in New York city was erected at the southern end of the City Hall Park, blotting out from a proper view the exquisite Renaissance façade of the City Hall, a structure that is one of the finest examples of public architecture in the United States.

The problem of placing sculptures in public squares in our American cities has become one of grave moment to our workers in the plastic arts, owing to the increase in the number of tall buildings enclosing such squares, which makes them little else but wells of brick and stone, the sculpture standing on the bottom of the well. Since a vista is so very important in such connections as these, it is a genuine contribution to the fine arts when a view is preserved as in the case at Maisons-Lafitte.

Obituary

PIERRE ROCHE

Pierre Roche (Fernand Massignon), French sculptor, is dead in Paris in his sixty-sixth year. He was a member of the Committee of the Société Nationale and a knight of the Legion of Honor. He had designed many medals and plaques commemorative of the World War. Several of his statues are in the Luxembourg.

EDWARD PARKER HAYDEN

Edward Parker Hayden, landscape painter, died at his home in Haydenville, Mass., February 7. He formerly had a studio in Columbus, O. He had exhibited there and in other cities. One of his pictures hangs in the Governor's mansion, Columbus.

E. ARTHUR ROWE

E. Arthur Rowe, English artist, died in Tunbridge Wells on January 26. He was best known for his paintings of English gardens. His work was much admired by Queen Alexandra, who visited his exhibitions and bought several of his canvases.

STEPHAN SINDING

The Norwegian sculptor, Stephan Sinding, is dead in Paris. He was seventy-five years old.

Rumania to Have Academy in Rome

ROME—The Rumanian government is planning to establish an academy in Rome similar in character and scope to the American Academy and that maintained by the French in Rome.

CURRENT SHOWS IN
NEW YORK GALLERIES

(Concluded from Page 1)

of the old and new schools of American portrait painting. The older school is represented by a bust portrait by J. Alden Weir, entitled "Lady in Brown," that has all the suavities of his manner as well as an air of undeniable good breeding in his original. "The Girl's Head," by Douglas Volk, falls well within this category of the older, graver tradition as does William Sartain's "Portrait of Mrs. J. S.," a tradition that cared more for permanency than for an effect of spontaneity in the mere painting and for solidity of form rather than for restlessness of movement.

Much of this older feeling is observable in Ellen Emmet Rand's "Portrait of Girl," a canvas that is beautiful with the gravity of youth; in George Bellows' "My Mother" that would be a distinguished painting for the hands alone; and in J. H. Gardner Soper's "Portrait of Mrs. Junius E. Cravens," a seated figure of a white-haired lady. Wayman Adams' half-length of John McClure Hamilton is a dashing performance, painted with definite assurance and with conscious humor.

Carl J. Blenner's Flower Pieces

Carl J. Blenner's seventeen flower pieces, on view in the John Levy Galleries through March 4, are reminders of the fact that the artist who devotes himself to this genre does not have to seek beauty, for it is always there before him. His special problem is one of arrangement in an effort to present familiar blooms in an unfamiliar pattern.

His overmantel panels are the handsomest flower pictures shown here in a long time, particularly in the three studies of dahlias arranged triptych fashion—the center panel rising in a graceful arch; in the "Lilacs and Apple Blossoms," exquisite in color; and in the "Fruits and Flowers." This last-named canvas is luscious in its richness and it has the added interest of passages of still-life painting in the big green glass bottle and brass milk jug as fine in quality as is his enticing fruit.

Among the other lovely flower pieces are "Asters" in a lustrous green jar, "Old Fashioned Bouquet," "Crimson Roses" and "Iris and Wisteria." Mr. Blenner has not been moved by any of the modern influences in this field, but paints his old-fashioned flowers in the old-fashioned way that most folk prefer.

Fowler's Oils and Water Colors

Carlton H. Fowler's exhibition at the Bookery Art Gallery, 14 West 47th street, through March 11, includes landscapes in water color and oil, thumb-box sketches, and a remarkably fine "Fifth Avenue at Twilight." The latter is particularly impressive, with its lofty buildings and night sky merging almost imperceptibly in the blue-black tones of night.

Among the larger landscapes are "Willows in Spring," in which fresh, pale greens dominate, and "In the Pine Woods," given to strong, dark tones and firm drawing. Mr. Fowler's delineations of trees display a thorough knowledge of form and draughtsmanship.

The water colors are distinguished by purity of tone, and the use of warm, clear, color. "Villa Gate, Mentone," and "A Garden, Mentone," have the charm of mellow, white walls and heavily banked foliage. The canals of Venice appear in several pictures.

Wenger's Stage Sets and Screens

There is an exhibition of stage designs, paintings and screens by John Wenger at the Galerie Intime, 749 Fifth Avenue, lasting through March 3. The appeal of color to the imagination and its consequent control of emotion is a subject thoroughly understood by Mr. Wenger, evident, for instance, in the brilliance and sparkle of the designs for "The Ship of Jewels," which bear out the spirit of joyous adventure, and in the subdued tones which evoke an apprehension of the mysterious in "The Poppy God."

Some of the settings contain a multiplicity of color while others, employing a smaller range, depend for their effect on the juxtaposition of large masses, as in "The Witch's House" in "Hansel and Gretel." Other designs are those for Tchaikowsky's "Nut Cracker Suite," "Tannhauser," the Prologue for "Pasion" and the Greenwich Village Theater's production of "Youth."

Mr. Wenger not only knows how to handle color in the theater, but uses it with equal effect on a smaller scale, as his eight screens bear witness. Without sacrificing any of the wealth of detail which comes of a rich imagination, he adapts his fantasies in color to screen size.

Miss Gabay's Quiet Excellence

The paintings by Esperanza Gabay, who is holding her first New York exhibition at Mrs. Malcolm's Gallery through March 4, will be something of a surprise to those who have not noticed the unusual character of her pictures at the Academy in the last two years.

There is an excellence about her work which argues both experience and skill. Landscapes and interiors alike are strong and vital, as well as quiet in key, unassuming, honest, and free from all exaggeration. With another artist, the almost sober greens, verging at times toward gray, might become characterless and dull— with her they are fresh and living. "Ellen's Back Yard" and "Willow Brook Farm" are especially typical of this.

A woman sitting in a hammock looking out toward a line of hills is not an unusual sub-

ject, and yet Miss Gabay stamps it with something strong, compelling, and distinguished. Nothing could be more honest and sincere in drawing and color than the flowers of her "Florist's Garden." Two interiors, "The Turquoise Kitchen" and "The Attic Room," are restful in their suggestion of repose. In the former, bright flowers are dimmed in shadow, while in the latter, the white bed and walls take on a mellow warmth in the half light.

A Stuart Washington at Knoedler's

One of the most striking things about the Washington portrait by Gilbert Stuart, owned by Walter Jennings, that has been on view in the Knoedler Galleries this week, is the exquisite realism with which the accessories of the composition have been painted. These include an Empire marble-topped table on which are writing materials, a velvet-covered chair, a stone column, and curtains looped back to show the conventional landscape background of such a painting in that era.

Long before an art critic coined the phrase "tactile values," Gilbert Stuart knew what they were and put them into his work. And how well he understood them can be seen in this canvas in the rich pile of the velvet of the chair-back and its seat, the soft lustrous feeling of the satin curtains, and the firmness of the white marble, toned by time, as is the gilding of the table legs. The soft precision of the carving of those table legs is one of the distinguished notes in this still-life painting, an element in Stuart's work generally overlooked owing to the more predominant interest of the personality of his originals, of which Washington must always be first.

But in admiring these details no one who looks at this portrait can help but be struck afresh with the solidity of the figure beneath the graceful costume, how firmly it stands on its legs, how alive it is with the consciousness of the occasion. Here is a really great portrait, fit to stand with the masterpieces of the world in this field of art.

Kenneth Hayes Miller at Montross'

Renoir has another follower in Kenneth Hayes Miller. The Renoir nudes and the Renoir reds are so very much in evidence as to make those who remember the earlier manner of Miller's inclined to rub their eyes when entering the room in the Montross Gallery where his paintings are hung.

But there is none. The now-famous pinkish red is to be observed in the hat of one of the two "flappers" who are engaged in a "Casual Meeting," and in the "Red Barn" with its tree-forms quite in the "master's" manner. Lacking this peculiar color note the "Singer" is painted in the same mode, her face suggesting that she has just emitted what Sam Bernard used to call a "sour note." Nevertheless the painting of her mauve costume is a fine passage that one may applaud if the suggestion of music does not make an equally fine appeal.

In the twenty-four etchings and drypoints there is a greater and more personal variety of expression, ranging from a modern mother and child to forms that take on an archaic character. The exhibition will continue through March 4.

Simons' Horses Are Thrilling

Horses galloping to a fire, horses prancing in the manner of the "Haute Ecole," horses bearing American, French and Italian soldiers, horses bestrode by Buffalo Bill and one of his Indians in war feathers, horses trotting, horses suffering under the assaults of a blizzard—all these are the work of Amory C. Simons, an American sculptor long resident in France, and now on view in the Sculptors' Gallery, 152 East 40th Street.

Mr. Simons has practically devoted his entire life to studying the horse, as the above summary of his work will indicate. He works in bronze, for the most part, but his "Horses in a Blizzard" is in marble and in that material he is thoroughly at home, as the exquisite treatment of his surfaces shows. His two groups of fire horses are intended to be a memorial to those handsome, galloping creatures that have been "motorized" out of existence in the New York Fire Department.

With these sculptures are shown groups of drawings by Herman Palmer, chiefly of animals, and by Mahonri Young. The exhibition will continue through February, the gallery being open only from 2 to 6 p. m.

André Smith at Harlow's

Since drawings are very much in the fashion just now, André Smith falls into line with a group of these expressions of his art, together with his more familiar etchings, which are shown in the Harlow Galleries through March 3. The precise feeling for rectitude of construction in his buildings that has always been so refreshing a feature of Mr. Smith's etchings, is to be noted in his lovely drawings of Spanish townscapes and French street scenes, in which the color notes are very gracious indeed.

The etchings, practically all of which are new, are of Toledo and Segovian landscapes and figures and there is one delightful print of some houses in the old French fortress town of Carcassonne. As a souvenir of his war experiences, Mr. Smith shows half a dozen views of battle-battered northern France after the great guns had finished their work on town and countryside. In this group the visitor will be profoundly moved by the picture called "The Tortured Earth" and the view of the ruins of a church at Nieuport, that may be taken as symbols of what France has suffered in the war.